

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 50

John 21

INTRODUCTION: Read carefully the first part of John 21 to get the setting for our lesson today. The disciples were fishing when Jesus revealed Himself unto them. (Bear in mind, this is after the resurrection of Christ.) Peter came back to his rightful spiritual position, and Jesus talked to him using three words which we will discuss for our lesson today.

I. LOVE. Notice Jesus asked the question, “Lovest thou me?” in John 21:15, 16 and 17. Peter also used the word “love” in all three of these verses. However, in the Greek, these words are not the same. The word that Jesus used for love is a deep, abiding kind of love. It is God’s love. It is the love of God in our hearts. Jesus was asking Peter, “Do you deeply love Me? Do you love Me with all your heart?” Peter was responding, “Dear Lord, Thou knowest that I am fond of Thee.” The love that Jesus was talking about is the love that God gives us for others. The love that Peter was talking about is a fondness, like a person would love sunshine, would love to eat, would love to go to a ball game, etc. Hence, Jesus asked, “Peter, do you deeply love Me?” Peter said, “Lord, Thou knowest that I am fond of Thee.” Again Jesus asked Peter, “Peter, do you deeply love Me?” Peter said, “Lord, I am fond of Thee.” The third time Jesus asked again the same question and got the same answer.

How much do you love Jesus? Is it a deep, abiding love, or is it sort of a fondness? Does He have first place in your life, or is He down the list somewhere? Is He everything to you, or is He just a comfortable portion of your life?

II. SHEEP. Notice in verse 15 Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” In verse 16 He said, “Feed my sheep.” In verse 17 He said, “Feed my sheep.” Again, there is a play on words. The word for “lambs” in verse 15 has to do with “little bitty tender lambs.” The word “sheep” in verse 16 means “young sheep.” Then the word “sheep” in verse 17 means “full-grown sheep.” Here we have the work of a preacher of a church. We are to feed the little tiny ones, little children, if you please. (Teacher, spend some time here showing the little children the importance of their learning the Bible. Compare them to little lambs. A little lamb is the most helpless of all animals. A little lamb cannot find its way. A little lamb must have a leader. A little lamb cannot secure its own food. Of all the animals, the little lamb is the most helpless. Show the children here that God likens them to little lambs. They must “eat” what God’s leaders “feed” them. They must follow their advice and learn to grow up and be stronger in the Lord.)

Then we come to verse 16 where He mentions young sheep. The teenagers need a shepherd. Jesus was saying to Peter, “Peter, lead the teenagers, too. They need your help.” (Teacher, here we should stress to the teenagers the importance of following the will of God, following the Good Shepherd, and following the under-shepherd [pastor] and all the others who seek to guide them to the will of God.)

Then Peter was also to feed the full-grown sheep. See John 21:17. In other words, a person never gets too grown, too old or too mature but what he needs his pastor and spiritual guidance.

(Teacher, lead the pupils to thank God for those who led them as little children. Lead them to name those who helped them, especially when they were little lambs. Encourage them to write letters of gratitude to some of the teachers who taught them during the early years and who so seldom get praise from their pupils. Then lead them to do the same thing for those who helped guide them through the teen years. Have them call their names, and perhaps they could also write letters of gratitude to them.)

III. FEED. There is still a third word that is used in each of the three verses—John 21:15-17. The word is “feed.” Three times Jesus used the word “love,” and three times Peter used the word “love.”

Three times Jesus used the word “sheep” (or lambs), and three times He used the word “feed.” There is another play on words here. The word “feed” in verse 15 means, “give simple food to the little ones.” In other words, give them the basics. The new Christian should be fed the basics. The young child should be fed the basics—milk, if you please. The Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the golden rule, the Sermon on the Mount, the plan of salvation, baptism, etc. should be taught.

In verse 16 the word “feed” carries with it the thought, “to shepherd.” It implies, “to rule, to regulate, to lead, to manage.” This is very interesting, for it is the place where the words, “feed my sheep,” deal with the “young sheep” or the teenager. This tears down the philosophy that the teenager is to run the show, that the teenager is to have complete liberty and freedom. No, the truth is that God wants the teenager ruled, regulated, led, managed, etc. (Teacher, here is a good place to teach teenagers to be in subjection to their parents, to the pastor, to their teachers, to their leaders, to the law, etc.)

In verse 17 “feed” has to do with feeding stronger meat to the mature Christian.

CONCLUSION: The emphasis of the lesson could be toward age or toward spiritual age; in other words—the child, the teenager and the adult; or the spiritual child, the spiritual adolescent and the spiritual adult. There are three things to stress: (1) our love for Christ; (2) the importance of our development at each age level; and (3) the importance of our being properly obedient to authority.